

NORTHWEST LIQUOR QUEST ION.

The following is the gist of the speech made by Mr. Macdowall in the House of Commons during the debate on the liquor question:—

Mr. Macdowall:—"I should like to say a few words on the question raised by the hon. member for Brome (Mr. Fisher). The first question that occurs to me is, what was the object of the hon. gentleman in moving the amendment? And after hearing what he said I came to the conclusion that his object was not in the least in the interests of the people of the Northwest, but was to make a point against the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, or the Government, with respect to this liquor question, because he did not seem to take in the least the point of view of the people of the Northwest. We find it often said by the member on your left, sir, that the Northwest has been made by the Conservative party a dumping ground for political hacks, but I think that we in the Northwest may with much greater reason, say that the Northwest has been made by the Liberal party a dumping ground for unfortunate resolutions and amendments. I must say that resolutions such as this, introduced strictly from a party point of view, are very injurious to the best interests of the Northwest. Everyone who regards that great country, from a statesmanlike point of view, must know that in the Northwest the great future of Canada lies as a nation, and the sooner hon. members cease making the Northwest a football for political exigencies, the better it will be for that country and the whole Dominion. I am naturally interested in the question raised by the hon. member for Brome, and since some six weeks ago, when the Minister of the Interior laid the papers, asked for in reference to this question, before the House, I have been endeavoring frequently to get them. I only got them to day, very shortly before the House opened, and the hon. member for Brome then came to me and said he would give them to me, but expected me to deliver them up to him again immediately. Well, I thought these papers were brought down for the benefit of the whole House, but the hon. member for Brome kept them five or six weeks himself, and prevented those who are very deeply interested in the question from having an opportunity of seeing them. As it was I had only a short time to look over them. I notice that all the petitions seem to take a very different point of view from that which the hon. gentleman would lead this House to believe they did take. The first petition was from the mayor and corporation of Calgary in favor of the license system. The second is from Dr. Kennedy and residents of Alberta, asking that the manufacture of liquor should be allowed in the Northwest. The corporation urged that the use of permits was really very immoral, because these permits, although issued with the best intentions, were often used to cover the illegal sale of liquor, and it was impossible consequently to put down the traffic. The extensive area of the country also added to the difficulty. The citizens of Alberta in their petition represented that the present system was distasteful to the majority of the inhabitants of the Northwest. It is very curious that in this petition from the citizens of Alberta there are fifteen pages of signatures, which is a marked contrast with another petition that I find in this return. It appears that there were two petitions sent from the temperance association—one from the Temperance body of Regina, and these people did not ask that the license system should be put down, but asked for the appointment of commissioners who would give licenses to responsible parties for the sale of liquor. They also asked that there be proper restrictions to the sale of liquor, and that men of the detective force in connection with the Mounted Police should be appointed to ensure the carrying out of the law. The other petition in favor of prohibition in the Northwest was from Mr. Vidal, of Saris, Ont., on behalf of Mr. McLaren and Mr. Spence, officers of the council of the Dominion Alliance. I would simply contrast the petitions of the inhabitants of Alberta with the petitions of these temperance people. The Regina people asked that the license system should be introduced in the Northwest, and the Dominion Alliance asked that prohibition should be enforced throughout the Dominion. In the Alberta petition there are no less than fifteen pages of foolscap of signatures of people actually in the Northwest, and to the Ontario petition there are only three signatures. I mention this to show that the people in

the Northwest should be consulted in some measure concerning their own affairs. I do not believe that in any matters of legislation which come before the House and directly affect the people of the Northwest there should be any attention given to the prejudices of a small portion of the community in the older parts of Canada. I, myself, am averse to liquor circulating freely all over the land. I believe we ought to have strong, self-reliant, temperate people in the Northwest, but I do not believe that by restricting the liberties of the people you will make them moral. You must first educate them up to a state of morality, and then you will have a strong, self-reliant and moral people. The next memorial was from the Northwest Council in 1887, when the present Minister of the Interior was Lieutenant-Governor. In this memorial the representatives of the people in the Northwest showed that the present system was immoral and detrimental to the best interests of the Northwest, and they urged that powers similar to those enjoyed by the older provinces under the British North America Act should be granted to the Northwest Territories, and that the provisional districts in the Northwest should be districts under the said Act. When I first spoke on this subject in the House I believed at that time that the system I referred to was the best system. I believe nothing could be better than to place the people of the Northwest in exactly the same position as the people of the rest of Canada. They know what is good for themselves. The proposal does not there to improve their condition and not to drink, for if they wanted to drink they could get drink a great deal cheaper down here; but they do not want their liberties restricted. The next petition is from the Northwest Assembly, presented during the time of the present Lieutenant-Governor. This petition asked either for a plebiscite, or that the powers granted to the other provinces should be granted to the Northwest. I think it would be better that this should be done rather than that a plebiscite should be taken. At the time of my election the liquor question was a live one in the Northwest, and I explained to my constituents the stand I would take. I said I did not believe a local option; I did not believe in a small minority, through sentimental motives, being allowed to dictate to the majority, but that, as there appeared to be throughout Canada, a certain wave in favor of local option, I did not think that any one who desired to represent the feelings of the people should go against that wave, which plainly indicated the public opinion of the country. Since then another wave has passed over the country, and swept away the Canada Temperance Act; so now I feel rather at variance with the opinion I expressed before. I believe I can return to my first love, and again hold the opinion that it is not right to allow a minority, through sentimental motives, to dictate to the majority; but as I believe myself to a certain extent committed to the local option principle, I feel that I must stick to it, and therefore, I am in favor of giving to Manitoba and the Northwest the powers that are given to other provinces. There is another petition from the Regina Board of Trade, signed by Rev. J. Steele. Mr. Steele says the law now in force causes a waste of public money in the supplying of liquor. He pointed out the immense amount of money which has been spent in liquor imported into the Northwest under the present law. The Regina Board of Trade suggests that until the law is amended, such liquor should be made some use of—should be used for hospitals, and other such institutions, for the benefit of the sick. In referring to these questions, I shall quote from some local papers in the Northwest to show what the feeling is there, and throughout the country. Commissioner Hechmer, I know, is not in favor of liquor being sold everywhere throughout the Northwest; he is rather inclined to temperance than otherwise—I shall quote from the Prince Albert TIMES the suggestion of Com. Hechmer, that the manufacture and sale of beer be allowed in the Territories under very stringent regulations. The Prince Albert TIMES, commenting on this subject, says: "We long since advocated the course suggested by the commissioner, and still believe it is the proper course to adopt. We hope that the Government will at once 'act on the advice of the commissioner in this matter.' I think the commissioner might have gone a little further than he did go. I will quote from the Calgary Herald which says editorially:—"A large majority of the representatives of the people announced themselves fairly and squarely in favor of high license while a fair portion of the small minority, while not supporting high license, did not actually oppose it." The Edmonton Bulletin, which is edited by a gentleman whose inclinations are decidedly towards temperance, says of the question:—"The second resolution passed, re-affirmed the desire of the Assembly to have a vote taken, and asked that the Federal Government, as having the right to do so, take the vote; and afterwards asked, if it were not the pleasure of the Federal authorities to grant that request, that provincial powers be granted the Assembly in the matter. This resolution was carried by a vote of 13 to 7." That shows that the liquor question is in a very unsatisfactory state in the Northwest, and the people there feel that they ought to be treated in this matter in the same way as the people throughout the rest of Canada. One of the great privileges of being a British subject is that a man can do just as he likes in any part of the British realm, so long as he does not transgress the law of those realms. We in the Northwest are not in this position.

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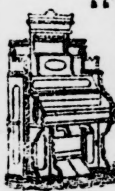
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We have a different measure of freedom just now from the majority of the people of the older Provinces and Manitoba, and we simply desire, now that we have representation in this House, to be placed in this position as the people of the rest of the Dominion. I believe myself that this law, as it at present stands, is most unconstitutional in every way, because, as I have stated in this House in almost every Session that I have been here, and I will repeat it for the benefit of the hon. member for Brant and others, it is a living under constitutional government, we should have something to say in regard to the law that governs us. But this law which prevails in the Northwest was passed by a Parliament in which that part of the country was not represented. It was a most arbitrary law, and now that we have representation here, I maintain that it is unconstitutional in spirit, if not in law. There is just one other point which I wish to refer to. I am sure there are a great many honorable members in this House who believe in strict prohibition, but at the same time if they believe in the constitution under which we live, they must allow that the opinions of the representatives of the Northwest, when they are all in accord on one subject, should be respected by this House. We know that the representatives of the Northwest are very few in number. I myself am one who represents a district larger than the Province of Ontario, with a population of some 20,000 people scattered through it; the hon. member for Alberta (Mr. Davis) represents an enormous district too; Assiniboia is represented by two members; but these four districts cover an area nearly, if not quite as large as the rest of Canada put together. Although we are only four in number, and on that account it may be said that we do not represent the opinions of the people in this matter in a House of 215 members, still this House has another sure guide to follow, that is, the petitions of the people, and in saying this, I will simply refer to what is a matter of English history, which has been laid down by some of our greatest parliamentarians, that although the opinions of the representatives of the people may be a sure guide as to the inclinations of the people as to what is public opinion, there is still another way which must not be disregarded, and that is by petitions. I have already referred to some of the petitions which have been sent down, but I will go a little further and say there has never been a year, since the people of the Northwest were given representation in their Local Parliament, when petitions have not been passed and sent down to the Government of this country, asking that the law be altered with regard to this question. I would urge most strongly that the Government should alter the law, and put the people of the Northwest in the same position as the other people of Canada, that they should acknowledge that they are a temperate and intelligent people by so doing, and that they should give them the same freedom in regard to this matter which is accorded to others. They know they are backed up in doing that, not only by the whole force of the representatives of the Northwest in this House, but they can go back to the time when the Northwest was first given representation in the Local Assembly, and they will find that every year petitions have come down in favor of this course. On these two grounds, I think I am entitled to say that the people of the Northwest are very strongly in favor of this freedom being accorded to them, and that, if it is accorded to them, they will not abuse it.

The East End school has been closed for the past few days to allow the workmen to finish the building. A very large number of the scholars are laid up with influenza, which is so prevalent here this spring.

A fresh lot of top onions, Dutch sets and potato onions arrived this week for T.E. Jackson. A quantity of multipliers still on hand.

Mr. H. Mitchell expects a band of thoroughbred polled Angus cattle in next week from the east. They were purchased from Hon. Mr. Cameron, Quebec at a very high figure. Mr. Mitchell has some very fine Highland calves.

The body of George Stevens was found on the prairie on Friday evening last, near Mack Brook farm. This young man was subject to epileptic fits, and it is supposed that while on the way to Mack Brook he took a fit, and as no assistance was near he died from exhaustion. Young Stevens was a nephew of Joseph and T.O. Davis, and has been in Prince Albert for a number of years.

What promises to be a rather interesting trial will come up before Judge Macdougall at the present sittings of the County Court, at Toronto. The will disputed is that of Thos. Rogers, who went to ranch in the Northwest in 1875. In 1877 Rogers met with some mishap and was found lying on the prairie, suffering from exposure, paralysis of the limbs and supposed senile stroke. Shortly before death he made a will in favor of two brothers, and one some years previous in favor of some other relatives. The beneficiaries under the first will claim that Rogers' trial was weakened from illness and exposure, and that the second will is therefore invalid. — Empire.

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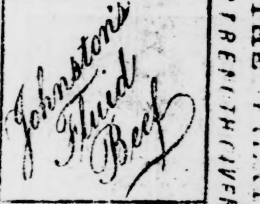
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